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Zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic

Zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic

Report of the Secretary-General*

Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	2
II.	Replies received from Governments	2
	Argentina	2
III.	Replies received from organizations and bodies of the United Nations system	3
	A. Department of Peacekeeping Operations	3
	B. Department for Disarmament Affairs	4
	C. Department of Public Information	4
	D. United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention	5
	E. World Food Programme	5
	F. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	6
	G. World Bank	6
	H. International Maritime Organization	6

* The present report was prepared on the basis of replies from organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and Member States.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, on 24 November 1999, adopted resolution 54/35 entitled "Zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic", in which it took note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/54/447) and requested the relevant organizations, organs and bodies of the United Nations system to render all appropriate assistance that States members of the zone might seek in their joint efforts to implement the declaration of the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to keep the implementation of resolution 41/11 and subsequent resolutions on the matter under review and to submit a report to the Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, taking into account, inter alia, the views expressed by Member States.

2. Pursuant to resolution 54/35, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale dated 22 May 2000 to the Governments of the States Members of the United Nations requesting their views on the implementation of the declaration of the zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic. On 22 May 2000, letters were also dispatched to the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations requesting them to submit their contributions for the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General by 31 July 2000.

3. As at 10 October 2000, one Government had replied and communications had been received from eight of the organizations and United Nations bodies addressed. Those replies are reflected in sections II and III of the present report, respectively. Any further replies received will be incorporated in an addendum to this report.

II. Replies received from Governments

Argentina

[Original: Spanish]
[26 July 2000]

1. The Argentine Republic understands that the zone constitutes an unparalleled forum for discussion and an excellent framework for in-depth analysis of strategies for development and trade between Latin America and Africa, as part of an increasingly closer, more active and more dynamic relationship.

2. The Argentine Republic reaffirms its conviction that the objectives of peace and cooperation which imbued the establishment of the zone can be attained only if the institutions of representative democracy are fully effective and there is full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the countries of the region.

3. The Argentine Republic has assumed the role of coordinator of the zone's Standing Committee because it has a special interest in peace-building and in promoting relations of cooperation among the States members of the zone. In this context, a number of proposals have been carried out with the aim of making progress in the various areas of the Buenos Aires plan of action (A/53/650, annex) of October 1998.

4. With regard to paragraph 3 of the Buenos Aires plan of action, on the strengthening of trade ties within the zone, Argentina believes there is a broad range of trade and investment opportunities, and therefore calls on member States to step up the exchange of information on missions, fairs and congresses, and of statistical data on supply, demand and the economic and trade characteristics of the States members of the zone.

5. Argentina welcomes the accession of Namibia and Benin to the 1993 Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas[1] of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and reiterates its appeal to States members of the zone to ratify or accede to it as well as to the 1995 New York Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.[2] It should be recalled that, in compliance with the former instrument and in order to prevent cases of dual registration, the States members of the zone undertook the commitment to cooperate among themselves in exchanging information on the registry of fishing vessels flying their flags.

6. Argentina understands that it could be feasible, if deemed appropriate, to continue exploring concerted actions related to the import of hazardous waste in the region, particularly through the exchange of

information and monitoring. The development of joint scientific and academic research activities could also be evaluated.

7. In the field of cooperation in preventing drug abuse and combating drug-trafficking and related crimes, Argentina deems it necessary to broaden and intensify the exchange of information on such topics as illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, prevention and assistance programmes, money-laundering and chemical precursors. In this connection, it calls on the States members of the zone to agree, at their next ministerial meeting, on the definition of modalities of intra-zone cooperation in order to ensure the development of common initiatives.

8. The Argentine Republic would also welcome with great interest a joint evaluation by Member States, under the provisions of paragraph 8 of the Buenos Aires plan of action, of the preparation of a specific proposal for requesting technical assistance for the zone, to be submitted without further delay to the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP).

9. With regard to security issues, the Argentine Republic has circulated among the States members of the zone various international instruments with the aim of strengthening the regional consensus on these issues and deepening the international conviction that the zone should be a region free from the arms race and nuclear weapons.

10. In this connection, Argentina reiterates its invitation to the international community, in particular to the States members of the zone, to sign and ratify the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.[3]

11. It is hoped that the conflicts that, regrettably, still affect States members of the zone can be resolved with the speed warranted by humanitarian emergencies. In the meantime, the Argentine Republic believes that the zone is a suitable framework for making known to all interested nations its willingness to cooperate in the peaceful solution of regional conflicts. Indeed, Argentina actively participates in the United Nations peacekeeping operations and is prepared to continue contributing to peace-building, security, justice and growth in the States members of the zone.

12. The Argentine Republic reiterates its interest in the establishment, by each of the countries members of the zone, of a national focal point (which would also be the focal point of the White Helmets initiative) with the aim of facilitating the linkages among Member States and ensuring more fluid communication. In this regard, it appeals to those countries that have not yet done so to designate their respective focal points.

13. It is important to point out the continuing colonial status of the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands in the South Atlantic, which affects the territorial integrity of the Argentine Republic. Despite Argentina's efforts to promote dialogue and a peaceful and lasting solution of the question of the Malvinas, its commitment to respecting the way of life of the islands' inhabitants, and numerous appeals by the international community for a negotiated solution, it has not been possible to resume negotiations to end the sovereignty dispute. The Argentine Republic believes that a solution to this important issue will help to consolidate stability and cooperation in the South Atlantic on a permanent basis.

III. Replies received from organizations and bodies of the United Nations system

A. Department of Peacekeeping Operations

1. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes have become essential elements in the growing multidimensional peacekeeping operations. Such programmes conducted with the support of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations Secretariat as part of the transition efforts in post-conflict situations help to create the conditions for peace in a country and to reduce instability in a region.

2. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations actively cooperates with Governments and provides the technical expertise required for the disposal of arms and ammunitions collected during the disarmament exercise, as was the case in Liberia and in the Central African Republic. These were considered important steps in the fight against the proliferation of arms which has become a major contributing factor to the persistence of conflicts.

3. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations also cooperates with Governments and relevant agencies to increase awareness. Information on crucial aspects of peace efforts is included in the Department's training missions, and public information programmes and materials on the subject are made available for use of Member States.

4. In Sierra Leone, despite the difficulties that the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) continues to face, the DDR plan remains a crucial element of the peace process. In accordance with Security Council resolutions 1270 (1999) of 22 October 1999 and 1289 (2000) of 7 February 2000, UNAMSIL is working closely with the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration to assist the Government with steps aimed at addressing security as well as related technical issues in order to advance the peace process.

5. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) under Security Council resolution 1291 (2000) envisages United Nations assistance in the comprehensive disarmament, resettlement and reintegration process as provided for in the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement (S/1999/815, annex). However, owing to the fighting in different areas and the overall security concerns in the country, the deployment of phase II of MONUC could not proceed as envisaged.

B. Department for Disarmament Affairs

1. On 9 March 2000, the Department for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, under the auspices of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, attended the first regular meeting of the Consultative Committee to the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Material (see A/53/78, annex), which was held in Washington, D.C. One important aspect of the meeting was the proposal made by the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) for the developing of a training programme for the 1997 firearms model regulation in which the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean will be the key partner.

2. Through the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, the Department for Disarmament Affairs co-organized, with the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the first continental meeting of African experts on small arms and light weapons. The meeting, which was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 17 to 19 May 2000, is the forerunner to the OAU regional conference on small arms and light weapons to be held in Bamako, Mali, at the end of November 2000, in preparation of the 2001 United Nations conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

3. Further to the request from the Government of the Niger for assistance in the collection of small arms, in July 2000, the Department for Disarmament Affairs headed a fact-finding mission to the Niger. During the same period, an information-gathering mission was also sent to the Congo which had sought the Department's assistance in addressing the problem of illicit small arms and light weapons in the country. In addition, the Department is in the process of assisting the Government of Guinea-Bissau with fund-raising for its project on the collection of illegal arms from the civilian population.

C. Department of Public Information

1. The adoption of General Assembly resolution 54/35 on 24 November 1999 was highlighted by the Department of Public Information radio news programme in English, French, Russian, Dutch and Kiswahili for broadcasting organizations worldwide. Press releases were issued in English and French by the Press Services in New York and Geneva.

2. The Radio Service, in its news bulletins, extensively covered the situations in Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Other topics covered that were relevant to the region included: cooperation between the United Nations and Africa after a ceasefire accord on the Democratic Republic of the Congo; visit of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to Brazil; an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) call on the international community to increase humanitarian assistance to Liberia; and the fight against drug-trafficking.

3. In addition, the Department produced the following seven radio magazine programmes in English, Chinese and Portuguese:

(a) Brazil: good perspectives in economic recovery in medium term;

(b) Amazon: conservation and development;

(c) Brazil: vital goals for a new millennium;

(d) Disarmament: non-nuclear proliferation;

(e) The World Bank and Brazil's rainforests;

(f) Interview with Luis Felipe Macedo on small weapons;

(g) A landmark judgement from the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

4. The Department helped to organize and install the United Nations Peacekeeping exhibit "United Nations Peacekeeping: A Half-Century of Experience" in Accra, Ghana, the first African venue of the exhibition. Opened on 7 July 2000 by the Secretary-General, the exhibit illustrates Ghana's contribution to the United Nations peacekeeping efforts over the past 40 years. Part of the exhibit will remain for use by the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre. The Secretary-General donated his personal collection of over 40 peacekeeping medals to the Training Centre and presented two plaques to honour the Ghana Armed Forces and Police Service; a third plaque was given in memory of all the peacekeepers who had died in service to the United Nations. The United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in Accra produced a book entitled *Ghana: Four Decades of United Nations and Regional Peacekeeping* for the occasion.

5. UNICs in the region publicized the Secretary-General's address on Africa to the Security Council in September 1999, the Council's "month of Africa" in January 2000 and the ongoing efforts of the United Nations, inter alia, in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone. The Directors of UNICs in Accra and Lagos gave a number of interviews on these efforts to both written and electronic media. UNIC Buenos Aires, together with local partners, organized a day on peace involving 1,600 students and teachers, UNIC Lomé held a two-day workshop on the culture of peace, and UNIC Yaoundé co-produced several radio programmes on the issue. UNIC Dakar organized a non-governmental organization conference on the effects of globalization on rural areas and vulnerable groups. Regarding the environment, UNIC Rio de Janeiro gave considerable assistance to the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (A/49/84/Add.2, annex, appendix II), held in Recife, Brazil, in November 1999. The Director of UNIC Lagos spoke at the Financial Institutions Environment Forum in Abuja, Nigeria, in June 2000. During Human Rights Day, the Director of UNIC Accra was involved in several radio and television programmes and also participated in a day-long seminar. On the issue of drugs, the Director of UNIC Buenos Aires delivered a lecture entitled "Youth, violence and addiction" at the Medical School of Buenos Aires University and the Centre also launched the report of the International Narcotics Control Board.

D. United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention

1. The United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention continued to cooperate with regional organizations such as OAU, ECOWAS, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in its technical cooperation activities. Of note was the South-South cooperation currently under way between Brazil and Southern African countries in the field of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS).

2. While no activities were undertaken as a direct result of General Assembly resolutions on the South Atlantic, the Office stands ready to assist Member States of the region in this regard upon request.

E. World Food Programme

1. The World Food Programme (WFP) is providing humanitarian assistance in many of the countries mentioned in General Assembly resolution 54/35 in order to save lives and to maintain adequate nutritional standards for refugees, internally displaced persons and other vulnerable populations. One of the largest WFP emergency operations is in Angola. Since August 1999,

WFP has increased its monthly deliveries, mostly by air, from 12,000 to 16,000 tons.

2. WFP's approach towards complex emergencies acknowledges the need to incorporate from the beginning elements that address the longer-term needs of the people concerned by the crisis. Providing essential relief and recovery assistance helped to stabilize fragile political and security situations in these countries and allowed for an enabling environment for longer-term peaceful and durable solutions.

3. WFP is an active participant in the primary mechanisms for humanitarian coordination, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and its Working Group. At the field level, WFP is also involved in a number of other formal and informal inter-agency coordination mechanisms, with a view to ensuring timely and effective response. WFP's offer of common logistics services for the humanitarian community is an example of such inter-agency coordination.

F. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1. The Pilot Research Array (of buoys) in the Tropical Atlantic (PIRATA), led by Brazil and partnered by France and the United States of America, continued to collect data on marine and atmospheric conditions in the South Atlantic region. In addition, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) continued their cooperation, through Member States, in the collection of surface ocean data through drifting surface floats (Drifting Buoy Coordination Panel (DBCP)), and disposable bathythermographs deployed along trade routes from ships of opportunity under the ship-of-opportunity Programme (SOOP). These various data contribute to rainfall forecasts in South America and Western Africa, especially the drought-prone areas of north-east Brazil, Western Africa and the Sahel. DBCP, SOOP and PIRATA are all parts of the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS), sponsored by IOC, WMO, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU).

G. The World Bank

1. The fact that, after the country's civil conflict ended, Guinea-Bissau settled all overdue payments to the World Bank allowed for the country's accrual status to be restored in May 1999. As of June 2000, 22 projects were being implemented, whose value amounted to about US$ 269.9 million equivalent. Included in these projects is a quick-disbursing US $25 million equivalent economic recovery and rehabilitation credit which was approved in May 2000.

2. Prior to the recent outbreak of fighting in Sierra Leone, the World Bank had prepared an interim support strategy which was approved by the Bank's Board of Executive Directors in December 1999. Its main objective is to provide quick financial, technical and humanitarian assistance in support of disarmament and demobilization, and of reintegration and reconstruction activities. In February 2000, the Bank's Vice-President for External and United Nations Affairs joined senior officials from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for a mission under the Brookings Initiative to Sierra Leone and the subregion which was aimed at bridging the gaps between emergency humanitarian assistance and sustainable development. The mission identified several regional challenges and priorities for action. Also in February, the Bank's Board approved a quick-disbursing US$ 20 million economic recovery and rehabilitation credit to provide critical budgetary and balance-of-payments support. In addition, restructuring of the portfolio to meet emergency needs in the post-conflict situation was completed for consideration by the Bank's Board. As the situation was stabilizing after the crisis of May 2000, the Bank's country Director undertook a mission to Sierra Leone to, among other things, assess the situation and accelerate the Bank's resumption of its activities.

H. International Maritime Organization

1. During the last few years, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has put considerable effort into exploring ways to ensure that the transport of irradiated nuclear fuels by sea is both safe and environmentally sound. All aspects of the transport process have been duly explored and consideration has also been given to actions that may need to be taken in

the unlikely event of an accident involving ships carrying such cargoes.

2. These deliberations have resulted in the following:

(a) Amendments to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) and the Code for the Safe Carriage of Irradiated Nuclear Fuel, Plutonium and High-Level Radioactive Wastes in Flasks on Board Ships (INF Code) in order to make this code mandatory;

(b) Approval of these amendments by the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) at its sixty-ninth session and their adoption at its seventy-first session, the amendments including, inter alia, the following: a requirement that every ship carrying INF cargo should carry on board a shipboard emergency plan based on recommendatory guidelines developed by IMO; and a requirement to report any incident, involving INF cargo, to the nearest coastal State;

(c) Creation of an informal inter-agency group comprising IMO, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and UNEP to evaluate the potential hazards posed by radioactive material to the environment. The initial task of this group was to conduct a literature review of the subject using two independent consultants. This task has been completed and the report submitted to the next session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee for further consideration prior to the taking of a decision on how to proceed;

(d) Detailed consideration on what actions, if any, should be taken in the event of the loss of INF material overboard. It is anticipated that such actions may be dependent on the location at which such a loss may occur, and that the results of the above literature survey will enable well-informed decisions to be taken;

(e) A continuous review of all of IMO's regulations related to the transport of INF material in order to ensure that all appropriate actions to minimize the associated risks involved can be taken.

3. It is noteworthy that regulating the marine environment by international standards constituted one of the key aspects of the IMO's mandate, whose global focus encapsulates both coastal and landlocked States as well as international waters falling within the geographical sphere of the zone of peace. IMO member States within the zone were active participants in the entire spectrum of the IMO's activities.

4. IMO has also developed an Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP) as a mechanism for providing assistance to developing Member States in the zone in building their institutional and human capacities as a basis for the effective implementation and enforcement of IMO's global maritime standards focusing on: maritime safety and related aspects of shipping and ports; marine environment protection; maritime legislation; and facilitation of international traffic.

5. Implementation of the relevant ITCP projects derived from these focus areas is realized through partnership arrangements among IMO, beneficiary member States or regional entities and the international donor community.

Notes

[1] *International Fisheries Instruments* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.V.II), sect. II.

[2] Ibid., sect. I; see also A/CONF.164/37.

[3] See CD/1478.